

Bubble City: Chapter 2

On his way into the office, Trent saw a pretty young girl and decided to use it as an opportunity to improve his marketing skills. "Hello there," he shouted at a small and slender woman wearing a huge black coat. She didn't say anything so he ran to catch up with her. "Hello there," he shouted again, this time louder and closer to his face. "Umm, hello," she mumbled and tried to hurry past. "What's your name?" he shouted. "Mm, Jessica," she mumbled. "Hello there, Jessica," he shouted. "My name's Trent and I have a very exciting service I want to tell you about. I think it will revolutionize the way you look at the news industry today. It's called Newsflip and—" They had come to the end of the block and Jessica had decided to dart across the street, dodging traffic. Trent decided not to follow. "Crazy bitch," he muttered.

But shortly after he got into the office and settled into his desk, he got to watch another stunningly attractive young thing, wearing a tight blouse and tighter jeans saunter over to his desk. "Trent," she said, sounding just happy enough that you couldn't honestly describe her as sounding unhappy, "you've got a call from the press on line 3." "Thanks Sandy," he said and watched her ass swing as she sauntered away from his desk. He picked up the phone. "Newsflip, Trent speaking."

"Hellllo, there," said an effusive voice at the other end of the line. "I'm calling from Digital World News Online Monthly and we're writing a feature segment about today's top users of NNA. Now, obviously, I want to give Newsflip top billing, so I was hoping you had some time to answer a few questions about your site for us good folks." "Why, of course," Trent said chivalrously. "Anything for the press!"

"Well, my first question is how strong is your commitment to NNA?" "Oh, total, total. I know there have been some nasty and false rumors swirling around, but I can assure you those are untrue. We are 100% committed to standing on the strength of the NNA platform, which we're committed to as well. Kind of like a man who's chained to the platform that he's chained to, if you know what I mean?" "Ohhh, I doooo," cooed the reporter in a voice that was less than convincing.

"And do you have any problems or complaints with it? Have you been doing any research into improving it?" "Well, honestly, it's such a great platform that we have our hands full just using it as it is, frankly." "So you have no one working on the internals?" "No, but it's not really necessary as it's such a strong foundation for our platform."

"I see. Well, thank you so much for your time, Mr. ..." "Oh, Trent, just call me Trent." "Well, thank you so much for your time, Trent. This has been very valuable for the article." "Well, thank you." "Bye!" "Bye." "Bye." "Bye." "Bye." "Um, bye." A long pause. "Bye..." "Bye." "Bye." "Bye." "Bye!" Trent hung up.

Nice journalist, Trent thought. He should note that down. What was her name? Hmm, he didn't think she said.

"Sandy!" he yelled out over the office. The girl in the tight blouse scurried over to his desk. "Yes, sir?" "I'm gonna take a meditation break for about fifteen minutes." "Yes, sir; I'll do the usual." "Thanks, Sandy." He again watched her saunter back to her desk. She ran to the small closet he'd reclaimed as his meditation chamber and locked the door behind him.

It was Thursday, so Sarah decided to knock off work a bit early to go to her street fighting class. They met in the unfinished basement of what Sarah recognized as the old Pets.com building, but Sarah doubted few of the other participants would recognize it as such. Instead, they knew it mostly as the place where they got their noses ground into the cement and left blood stains on the wall, before stepping back and thanking their instructor politely for the demonstration.

"Who wants to go first today?" Owen, their instructor, asked. A girl in a pink jumpsuit raised her hand. Owen loved picking on the newbies. "Now this move is called the jackdrill," he said, picking the jumpsuited girl up by her waist, flipping her upside-down, and grinding her head into the mat on the floor by spinning her around. After a couple seconds he righted and returned her, his voice changing to sincerely apologetic. "Are you alright? Was that OK?" he said, looking her over. "Here, here, let me fix your hair." "Oh, no, no, thank you," the girl said, a bit stunned, "it's fine."

When it was time to practice on their own, Sarah got paired up with an outrageously cute and muscular man she'd been eying the whole evening. "Hey there," she said, extending her arm. "I'm Sarah." "Jonathan," he said, smiling winningly. She felt her heart melt just a little bit. Flipping Jonathan by the waist and watching the muscles on his back ripple, she became determined to ask him out at the end of the lesson.

She didn't need to. As he was toweling the sweat off his chest, he approached her. "So Sarah, you doing anything tonight?" She thought for a second. Jason wanted to talk about some weird work thing he'd noticed but she could blow that off for a night. "Uh, nope," she answered. "Why don't I take you out to dinner?" he asked. "Sure, that'd be great," she said, smiling.

At dinner, she discovered that Jonathan shared her interests. In fact, he also appeared to share her friends' interests as well as various other random interests she could think of. On just about any subject he could marshal a stream of facts, with names and dates and places, capped off by a touching personal anecdote or a joke.

Erlang: "Isn't Erlang fantastic? I just love the way that message-passing unifies both the internal control structure and the intra-process communication. That said, the syntax could use some work... I remember one time I showed this Erlang program to a friend and they thought it was Perl!"

Guitar: "Oh, I just think the guitar is a beautiful instrument. I love the way you get lost in the sound when you're playing a Robert Plant solo. I remember one time when I got lost in the sound and didn't find my way out for weeks!"

Slovenian philosophy: "I just can't get enough of Å½iÅ¼ek! I mean, I know a lot of people think using a Lacanian model to question notions of false consciousness runs afoul of modern Popperian scientific sensibility, but at the very least now that the Bayesians have taken up arms against the Popperites they'll be willing to admit there's at least some analytical heft to the Lacanian techniques. God, you're great. I remember this one time when I told a friend that and they just looked at me."

Sarah accidentally dropped her napkin on the floor and Jonathan ran over to pick it up for her and she watched his muscles ripple beneath his clothes and fantasized about tearing them off. "Hey, my place is just down the street a little. Want to come back for a bit?" So they walked, chatting happily, through the Mission and she let him into her apartment and they chatted some more on the couch for a bit, finding odd excuses to move a bit closer to each other and look into each others' eyes until Sarah reached out for the kiss and Jonathan followed and pushed her down onto the couch, making out for a while before he began lifting off her shirt.

Wayne spent the first load of cash on a fancy new office, the best to give the right impression about the Wayne Darnus Center for User Priorities, of course. Then he hired an attractive assistant for the same reason (and to help him with his soon-to-be-busy schedule).

"What's the first order of business?" he asked her, once he was settled in his plush new chair behind his imposing new desk. "Uh, we don't have any orders of business," she said. "OK, well then the first order of business is to think of one."

"What's the first order of business?" he asked her. "To think of a first order of business," she said. "Alright, I'll do that and get back to you."

"Although technically," he added, "it will be a second order of business since thinking of it already was the first order of business." "Good point," she said, and scurried off.

Jason spent the day thinking about the other afternoon he spent with Sarah. He'd come over to work but working led to chatting and chatting led to moving closer and pretty soon the only productive thing he got out of the day was exercise. As soon as he was done with what he was working on that day, he biked as fast as he could to Sarah's house and knocked on the door. "Hey there," he said smiling as she opened it. She didn't smile back; she just grabbed him and threw him against the wall, closing the door behind her with her foot. She grabbed his head and pushed it into the wall with her mouth, as he made pleasant-sounding noises. By the time they got into the bathroom, he was only half-clothed.

Then there was a knock on the door and they pulled away. "Who the fuck is that?" Jason asked. Sarah looked at the clock on her dresser. "Oh, shoot, I'm sorry. That's probably Jonathan." Jason looked at her for a while, puzzled. She looked back for what seemed like a long moment and then said "Oh, you do know I'm poly, right?"

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November 15, 2007